

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q I want to use a voice over IP (VoIP) program such as Skype or Fring on my mobile, and I don't want to worry about data costs. Can I use an unlimited mobile data tariff to make VoIP calls?

A The major mobile phone networks all have different policies when it comes to making VoIP calls with an unlimited data tariff, as well as different definitions of unlimited. To use unlimited VoIP on T-Mobile, you'll need to buy the Web 'n' walk Max tariff. This costs £53 per month and includes 10GB of data.

O₂, Vodafone and Orange don't have consumer-orientated unlimited data plans, but there are no VoIP restrictions on their standard services. 3 has recently launched a package specifically for Skype called X-Series Silver, which includes 5,000 free Skype minutes and 1GB of web-browsing data, and costs £5 per month on top of your normal voice tariff.

Chris Fynamore
Components and handhelds expert



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NAVMAN F30

★★★★★

£170 inc VAT

Many GPS devices can display traffic information, but they usually require a GPRS data connection and a subscription to a traffic service. Navman's F30 comes with a TMC module that receives the same RDS-TMC traffic broadcasts as your car's FM stereo, so you can pick up traffic information without a subscription and without incurring any GPRS costs.

The F30 has a similar design to Navman's more expensive N range. Along with a touch screen, there are short-cut buttons on the right for the main menu, to navigate to the nearest petrol station or car park and to change the navigation view. These are a welcome addition, as they save navigating through menu levels. There are also buttons to change the volume level.

The F30's home screen has bold and colourful icons, which let you plot a route to your home address and a new or recent address, as well as change the system settings. You can navigate to a UK postcode or city centre, or simply type in a street name and select from a list. Typing in addresses and postcodes isn't that easy, as the software runs slowly. There is a significant delay between pressing a key and the character appearing onscreen. The delay is especially bad when you're typing in a street name, as the software is searching its internal database at the same time. The postcode screen is better than most GPS devices', as the letters and numbers are on the same screen so you don't have to flick between them.

The software's interface may run slowly, but route calculation is fairly fast. The F30 took seven seconds to plot a route from central to south London, and 20 seconds to plot a route from London to Edinburgh. The F30 warned us that our route went up the M6 toll road, but didn't mention London's Congestion Charge zone.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Traffic information
- ✓ Good value
- ✗ Slow software

STANDALONE GPS Tele Atlas UK and Ireland maps, Navman SmartST for F Series navigation software, SiRFstar III receiver, TMC traffic information

PART CODE F30
SUPPLIER www.dixons.co.uk
DETAILS www.navman.com



The F30 is a competent navigator. The navigation screen is fairly busy, as the unit displays every road name instead of just the major ones. The map updates smoothly and the software has no problem keeping up with turns, while voice prompts are loud and clear. A large button on the right of the screen switches between 2D and 3D modes, as well as the itinerary view. This shows each turn on your journey and the distance between each one. The itinerary view takes ages to appear, though, and the F30 is missing the N series' useful safety view, which shows you the bare minimum of information and is less distracting than a moving map display.

The TMC traffic receiver is built into the unit's windscreen mount. The TMC aerial has two self-adhesive pads that stick to your windscreen, and attach to the aerial with Velcro. This makes it easy to

remove the aerial when you park. The traffic information is updated constantly and helps you plot a route around hold-ups.

Considering that it comes with free traffic updates, Navman's F30 is excellent value. Its software runs frustratingly slowly, however, so we'd still recommend TomTom's One Regional (see 'Also consider...' below) and pay the extra £30 for the Plus traffic service.

Chris Fynamore

Also consider...

TOMTOM One Regional

★★★★★

£155 inc VAT



TomTom's One Regional is a good-value GPS system with UK and Ireland maps. It's easy to use, comes with a touch screen and has big icons that you can operate with your finger. Navigation is accurate and the voice prompts are clear. It's the best-value standalone GPS we've seen.



STANDALONE GPS 3.1in 320x240 resolution display, integrated SiRFstar III receiver, TomTom Navigator software, Navteq UK and Ireland maps, 1GB SD card, 174g PART CODE 5N00.110 SUPPLIER www.thenavigationcompany.com DETAILS www.tomtom.com

✓ Fast software; easy to use FULL REVIEW Mar 2007

SONY ERICSSON K800i

★★★★★

£215 inc VAT SIM-free; free to £30 on £30-per-month contract



The K800i is Sony Ericsson's first 3-megapixel camera phone. The phone's camera focuses more quickly than any camera phone we have seen and it's even possible to capture action shots with the BestPic mode. There's also a proper flash, so shots taken in darkness are properly illuminated. The photos have little noise and are fine for 6x4in prints. Apart from a wobbly keypad, the phone is easy to use. This is the best camera phone available and it's good value on contract.



MOBILE PHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G, 240x320-resolution LCD, 64MB internal memory, Memory Stick Micro slot, USB, Bluetooth, 3-megapixel camera, 47x22x105mm, 115g PART CODE K800i SUPPLIER Vodafone/Orange/T-Mobile/O₂ DETAILS www.sonyericsson.co.uk ✓ Superb camera
✗ Uses Memory Stick Micro cards FULL REVIEW Dec 2006

FRING
Fring

★★

Free

Fring is a mobile messaging and Voice over IP (VoIP) application for Nokia Series 60 smartphones. Like PC instant messaging applications, you can have text chats with other users or make a VoIP call. Fring recommends a 3G or wireless network connection for voice calls, but it works over GPRS, too.

Fring also integrates with your existing services, so you can call or talk to your friends on MSN Messenger, Google Talk and Skype. If you want to use VoIP to call standard telephone lines, Fring can initiate a Skype Out call or integrate with your SIP service (such as Vonage) and let you make calls that way. There's no charge from Fring for this and you'll be billed in the usual way from Skype or your SIP provider.

Setting up the software is simple. After registering on the Fring website with your phone number, you're sent a text message with a link to download the software. After installation, you're prompted to choose your username and password, and choose whether you want Fring to connect to your Skype, Google Talk, MSN or SIP service. We found we had to restart our phone before the software would work properly.

Once it's up and running, Fring displays all your messaging contacts on one screen, and you have the option to call any of them using VoIP or start an instant messaging chat. For regular telephone numbers you have the option to make a



▲ Fring allows you to call your contacts using VoIP or start an IM chat

standard GSM call, or use Skype or SIP.

Although the Fring application and service is free, using it isn't. Unless you have an unlimited data account, you'll be charged by the megabyte for voice calls and instant messages by your mobile operator. Bear in mind that even 'unlimited' accounts

may be subject to a fair-use policy (see FAQ).

Fring's website estimates that it costs less than a penny a minute in data to make a call. Even if you add in the cost per minute of a Skype Out or SIP call, Fring phone calls are very competitive, especially if you're making international calls. However, we'd recommend using your bundled minutes where you can, as it's cheaper and Fring's voice quality is very poor.

Even though our test phone had a full 3G signal, calls to our Google Talk account were barely comprehensible. Fring-to-Fring calls between two phones were better, but the half-second delay on the line made flowing conversation impossible.

Chat also suffered from significant delays, sometimes taking as long as 30 seconds between sending a message and it arriving on a PC.

Fring is a bold idea, and it's useful to be able to communicate with a variety of messaging programs from your mobile. Unfortunately, the poor voice quality and huge delays on both calls and text-based chat cripple the program.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Integrates with lots of services
- ✗ Poor voice quality
- ✗ Lengthy voice and text delays

MOBILE MESSAGING APPLICATION
Requires Nokia Series 60 smartphone with wireless networking or 3G data support, 3G data contract, Skype Out/SIP subscription (to call landlines)
SUPPLIER www.fring.com
DETAILS www.fring.com

CHOOSING A...
GPS Device

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

MAP COVERAGE: UK and Ireland

SCREEN SIZE: 3½in

POSTCODE SUPPORT: Five characters

TRAFFIC DATA: None

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A GPS system with the minimum specifications listed above will cost you around £175. It's a standalone GPS unit, so you get everything you need in one compact handheld unit. Its screen is not particularly big or clear to see, and it will be quite slow at calculating routes. It has UK maps only, so you won't be able to use it in other parts of the world.

If you've got an existing PDA or smartphone, you can buy the software, maps and, if needed, GPS receiver in a kit. This will convert your handheld into a GPS system with similar specifications to those listed above. The cost will be similar, too.

2 If you want to travel further afield than the UK, you'll need to get new maps. These are usually available from the manufacturer at an extra cost. When you buy the maps, make sure you've got a memory card big enough to store them, or enough memory on your PDA or smartphone.

Alternatively, you can save a bit of money by buying a GPS system with a wider choice of maps in the first place.

3 Want quicker route calculation and a better display? Buy a more expensive standalone GPS unit with a quicker processor; a 4in screen or higher with a resolution of 480x272 will give you plenty of space for detailed maps. If you're using a PDA or smartphone and it seems slow, consider upgrading to a newer model with a quicker processor and a screen with a higher resolution.

4 If you travel a lot, a GPS system with real-time traffic information is essential. The most common way to get updates is by connecting to your mobile phone and downloading the latest information. This data is charged at normal network rates, though. Some high-end standalone GPS units have a TMC chip, which receives traffic information over the FM radio network for free.

Several high-end standalone units also have integrated microphones and can be used as a hands-free phone over a Bluetooth connection. To take advantage of this you'll need a mobile phone with Bluetooth.

ARCHOS
404 Camcorder

★★★★

£200 inc VAT

Archos's 404 Camcorder is a portable media player (PMP) with a built-in digital video camera. It plays most popular video and audio file types. The user interface can be confusing at first, but getting compatible content on to the player is easy using Windows Media Player 10 or 11. The 404 may have mediocre battery life and come without a mains charger, but it's good value.

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in, 320x240-pixel LCD, 30GB hard disk, plays MPEG4, H.264, MPEG2, WMV video (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, Protected WMA, Wav audio, 8 hours' music playback, 2½ hours' video playback, 100x78x15mm, 190g **PART CODE** Archos 404 CAM 30GB **SUPPLIER** www.argos.co.uk **DETAILS** www.archos.com
✓ Comprehensive file support ✗ Mediocre battery life
FULL REVIEW May 2007



PRICE CUT!

NAVICORE
Personal 2007
Multiplatform package

★★★★★

£130 inc VAT

BEST BUY Navicore Personal 2007 is a GPS navigation package for the Symbian operating system. The software mirrors the interface of whichever smartphone you install it on, so is easy to use. The navigation display and voice prompts are also clear, and there's a built-in speed camera database. It's a fast and comprehensive GPS.



GPS KIT Symbian Series 60, Series 80, UIQ compatible, Bluetooth SIRFstar III receiver, Navicore 2007 software, TeleAtlas UK and Ireland maps **SUPPLIER** www.mobilefun.co.uk **DETAILS** www.navicoretech.com ✓ Clear display; fast software
FULL REVIEW Mar 2007